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Congressional Testimony

TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: DO NEW THREATS REQUIRE NEW APPROACHES?

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Chairman Berman,
Esteemed Members of Congress,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you for inviting me to stand before this distinguished audience.

Transatlantic (i.e. NATO) or Euro-Atlantic (roughly, the OSCE) security today is embedded in a wholly different global context than 60, 35 or 20 years ago. Europe is no longer the battleground. It is no longer divided. And, in many ways, it is no longer central to the world's security dynamics. Other areas have risen to power, or plunged to chaos; the concept of security has changed greatly, and the nature of threats has mutated. Yet, we do have a problem there, even if this had not been recognized until the recent Georgia war.

The problem is, to put it in a nutshell, that, two decades after the end of the Cold War, Russia and the new states that emerged from the Soviet Union—Ukraine, Georgia and others—find themselves outside a meaningful security framework for that part of the world. The existing framework, formed by the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union, the great twin pillars of peace, stability and security, has greatly expanded in the last decade. Yet, it has fallen critically short of the promise of a "Europe whole and free".

This creates risks. Even before the Georgia war it should have been clear that safe limits of NATO's enlargement to the east had been achieved. After Georgia, this has become obvious to all. As the events of 2008 demonstrated, these risks are not limited to Georgia and Ukraine, but can affect the rest of Europe, and even the United States.

Right now, the mood is certainly less somber than 18-20 months ago, when it reached the levels last visited during the early years of President Reagan and the brief tenure of General Secretary Andropov. The general foreign policy reset in Washington has allowed U.S.-Russian relations to bounce back from those lower depths. Now, there are fewer irritants around, and more cooperation, from START to Iran to Afghanistan. Still, the fundamental problem remains, just beneath the surface.

The roots of this problem are largely psychological. There is no longer an ideological divide across Europe, nor is there a military stand-off. Trade and travel thrive across borders. Yet, there is a palpable obsession in Russia with America's intentions toward it, and an equally strong obsession in many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with Moscow's motives.

To call this problem essentially psychological is not to dismiss it. Rather, it is to point to the depth and strength of the prevalent sentiments. The respective fears are baseless, but they are not harmless. They misinform and misguide, and allow for wide manipulation. The time to act is now, while U.S.-Russian relations are on the mend. As we know from experience, windows of opportunity do not remain open forever.

The issue is how to go about squaring the circle of European security. No silver bullet can do it. The draft treaty proposed by President Medvedev would build a new League of Nations, but the security architecture he envisions seeks to create constraints to compensate for the lack of trust. In a way, it is too conservative to be realistic. However, even though

Medvedev's proposed remedy is probably ineffective, his broader initiative can be constructive.

It has already resulted in what is known as the Corfu process, a new discussion round under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This could be useful, but in a limited way only: the OSCE is not where the action in Europe is. There may be more action in the recently revived NATO-Russia Council, where Moscow has submitted a similar proposal, but this step is also mostly about tinkering with the problem, not seeking to resolve it.

There are some more radical ideas floated around, including a new recurrence of the "Russia-in-NATO" theme. In my view, this is a great idea whose time, unfortunately, has passed. Russia will not, in the foreseeable future, give up its strategic independence. NATO can only live with so much diversity—and divergence—in its ranks. And no one will benefit from China as a would-be adversary. Thus, one needs to think harder about how to treat, and finally cure, the twin paranoias I have described above.

Regarding the Russian fears, the United States needs to take the lead. The Obama administration has exercised care, tact and patience, and it has taken a number of Russian concerns aboard. This, however, is just clearing the ground, not yet building upon it. START is good, but, alone, it is not good enough. No amount of strategic arms reduction is capable of altering the nature of the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship, which is basically unchanged from the years of the Cold War. The confrontation's afterglow shines on.

If one looks for a game-changer, which can replace that pattern, it is cooperation on missile defenses. The United States has already offered this to Russia, but the Russians are not jumping at the offer. They evidently do not want to be a mere add-on to the U.S. program; they aspire to a parity-based deal; they claim an equal right with the United States to discuss and define threats: a long list. No question working on these issues is difficult, and a positive outcome—a joint U.S.-Russian-European missile defense system—is not assured. If, however, such a system were to become a reality at some point, this would constitute a dramatic improvement of U.S., Russian and European security.

As to further enlargement of NATO to the east, its prospects really depend on the countries concerned. Should an overwhelming majority in Ukraine, including a solid majority in Crimea support accession, no one will be able to veto or exploit it. The current circumstances are different, as reflected in the recent election. Georgia's situation is conditioned by the post-conflict realities on the ground. Admitting any country to the alliance should not lead to importing a real risk of military conflict with third parties.

Regarding the fears expressed by the Central Europeans, especially the Balts and the Poles, it would be Russia's turn to lead. Moscow needs to treat its neighbors' concerns seriously. Russia has already recognized Poland as a key country in the region and a key to better relations with the European Union as a whole. It has shown Warsaw some respect and expressed willingness to treat it as one of the EU's important members. Last month, Prime Minister Putin invited Polish Premier Donal Tusk to visit Katyn together: a welcome and deeply symbolic step. The Russians, however, need to go further. They need to develop a habit of regular consultations with the Poles like they have already developed with the

Germans, the French and a few others. They need to open the archives much wider. And they need to reach out to the Baltic States without provoking them unnecessarily with military exercises.

Above all, however, Americans, Europeans and Russians need to look to the future even as they draw lines under the past. The security issues of the 21st century call for a common cause among them. This is evident even now, on nuclear proliferation and climate change; energy security and counter-terrorism; cyberspace and the Arctic. Russia, of course, will not deliver Iran, but it is a key partner in any effort to bring the Iranian nuclear problem to peaceful resolution. Moscow will not decide the outcome in Afghanistan, but it helps with the U.S./NATO transit there and is able to contribute to an eventual settlement there. Russia will not solve the world's energy issues, but it can be helpful, from Europe to East Asia to the Arctic.

In the end, one needs to ask oneself a question: What is the future that we want? If one wants a whole and peaceful Europe, one needs to build an inclusive security community, a common security space. Europe's general prosperity can be helped by a common economic space, a continent-size free trade area and WTO membership for all. A freer Europe means the rule of law firmly established in all its countries, democracy through participation, and adherence to international norms and commitments. It can be helped by visa-free travel and open exchanges. The future is shaped by decisions taken today.

To motivate movement toward the desired future, we also need a new narrative. Not the divisive one of the Cold War days, which is heard today sometimes; and not the rosy one of the immediate post-Cold War, that hoped to do away with differences. The Americans, in view of their global role, need to think about broadening the community of responsible stakeholders, specifically to include Russia; the Europeans, about finally reuniting their family, which remains incomplete and thus insecure; and the Russians, about finding, after all, their place and role in the world.

Thank you.